

MYSTICISM OF PAIN IN CLARETIAN SPIRITUALITY
OR
MEDITATIONS ON HOLQUIN

Holquin is one event out of a continuous line of events, an excerpt from the holy and dedicated life of St. Anthony Claret. Holquin is that glance at the continuous oblation of Our Holy Father Founder which shows him sustaining an attack on his person. It is one oblation among the many which constituted his life as a Saint.

As we look through a knothole of the fence and see him passing by in the race of life the view we capture and impress upon ourselves may be multiplied and extended so as to be predicated of the entire career of St. Claret. The virtue we see at Holquin can in some manner be predicated in all the other events of his life. This is so because, being a saint, Anthony Claret was motivated by a single principle. And this principle was supernatural. His actions sprang forth in oneness. Their unity was based on incorporation and transformation into Christ.

We may believe from the facts of his life that Our Father Founder was transformed into Christ at an early stage in his career. His pious soul strove from early youth to reach Christ. Truly, in him grace could be confirmed, and the

Eternal Priesthood could be realized in the fulness of its character - alter Christus. Therefore his individual actions were vitalized from the Sacred Heart; he was in Christ doing always but one thing, the will of the Father.

And so we come to this conclusion. In looking at Claret we see Christ.

This conclusion has value if we are of those who sincerely desire to reach God through Christ, the Eternal High Priest. Our Mediator must be known in order to be attained. And so besides making Himself known through the revelation of Sacred Scripture, the Holy Mass, and the Sacraments, Our Blessed Savior, cognizant of our limitations, also makes Himself known to us through His saints.

Anthony Claret is not so much a saint whom we read about in a book, as he is a Book himself. He is Christ-Revealed. Some say this is an obtuse approach to holiness, for have we not been given Christ as our study of God-revealed? Indeed we have, but personal experience and the testimony of spiritual veterans testify to the long years it takes ordinary people to become holy, and to the fact that Christ, the way, the truth, and the life, is not fully comprehended in a short time, much less the Invisible Godhead.

As an extremely brilliant light is better comprehended when directed through a prism presenting a spectrum of colors,

so Christ, the light of the world, is in one respect comprehended more easily when seen through the members of His Mystical Body. St. John the Evangelist verified this by his confidence in exhorting all men to that simple standard of life, "love one another;" for he knew this act could only be persevered in by the seeing of Christ in one's neighbor.

In St. Claret we have an advantage of seeing Christ presented in a color rich and pure. Richness and purity of likeness to Christ are found in Our Father Founder because of his manifold and exalted mission, and because of his generosity in fulfilling it. We are fortunate to be the sons of a Father so well prepared with adornments of nature and grace.

From one who is a founder, precursor, writer, preacher, confessor, director, organizer, etc., we can learn many things. In the Mystical Body, St. Claret was a major organ; his function as important as it was variegated. One office in particular draws our attention as we view St. Claret at Holquin, namely, that of martyr.

In the episode of Holquin, Our Holy Father Founder was given the chance to offer his blood for Christ. It was a part of his "I die daily for Christ." Only it was in a more palpable and startling way. It was more demanding on human nature as such, our instinct of self-preservation being what it is.

St. Claret was equal to the situation. In a later day it must have been a source of joy. At the time no doubt it was a shock. His soul was seeking the things that are above, but the devil did not disdain to surprise him from below. He carried on, as any man must. One cannot just say, "this situation is repugnant; I chose to avoid it." And then withdraw into his sub-conscious. But more important we can surmise something of "how" St. Claret carried on. The basis for the surmisal is drawn from St. Claret's attitude toward his assailant.

And this attitude is perhaps the most important aspect of the entire episode of Holguin. The attitude is of spontaneous, sincere, and complete pardon.

Never departed from Christ, St. Claret immediately overflowed with loving mercy from the Sacred Heart he had made his own. He could spontaneously extend a heart free from malice and anger, because for many years it had become habituated to moving in the same direction as the Heart in which it was immersed. He could sincerely extend a pardoning heart, because he had long dwelt with Truth and Goodness; he had long been the instrument of Him who came not to call the just, but sinners. And he could completely extend a heart full of pardon, because he himself, a man encompassed with infirmity, had been given to drink fully from the chalice of that Life which God has given more abundantly.

For his role as a shepherd of souls, St. Claret had been prepared in the school of mystical experience; that is, in the depths of the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit. He had experienced mercy unto gracious depths. One day in the future, his soul swept so clean was to be the continuous Receptacle of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

It is easy to be merciful when you have received boundless mercy. But the credit lies in this, that one has persevered with confidence through the prolonged trials of purification that precede the merciful gift of mercy. It is this gift which gives mastery over self, complete surrender to God, and the possession of that Heart for which incessant prayer has gone forth, "O Lord, make our hearts one with Thine."

Mercy was Claret's to give, for he had won it. It was a part of him, for he was a part of Christ. To be merciful was natural for him, for he had struggled to attain the supernatural. He had much to give, for he had believed in much.

Our Holy Founder having put off himself and put on Christ, lived a full, long life. Or rather it was not he that lived, but Christ that lived in him. Holquin shows us what Christ is, what Christ does. We see Him in St. Claret.

There is something admirable in the spontaneous, sincere, and merciful pardon of St. Claret at Holquin. It is chiefly the mercy which he possessed, that mercy which, practically

speaking, is perhaps our greatest gift from God. After all the whole Gospel message is none other than this, that God so loved the world as to send His Only Son to save us from our sins.

St. Claret showed mercy, that is, he showed Christ. Claret in himself showed us Christ, and this was achieved through his oneness with Christ through transformation. Now all men are called to be the sons of God through transformation into Jesus Christ. We of the Claretian Congregation have the particular mark of a special filiation, which disposes us the better to accomplish this transformation. We have a powerful Father and Mother eager to help us.

From them we can expect practical means as well as heavenly aid. Our Father, St. Claret, leads us to a practical means through the episode of Holguin. By means of his admirable virtue he stimulates us to desire the possession of the same virtue. He provokes us namely, to prayer.

There is one prayer which is practical, mystical, Claretian. It is the "double Our Father." It is called double because it is addressed first to God, our Heavenly Father, and then to St. Claret, our founding Father. The first is well known. The second consists in applying the words of the Our Father to St. Claret. Thus we say, "Our Father who art in Heaven, for truly he is our Father, and heaven is where he is; hallowed be thy name, for Holy Mother Church has infallibly ranked him with the Canonized; thy kingdom come, that is,

thy Congregation grow, spread, and flourish; thy will be done, that is, may thy holy Constitutions be fulfilled; on earth, by us; as it is in heaven, by our triumphant brethren; give us this day our daily bread, send us light and strength; and forgive us our trespasses, obtain our pardon from God; as we forgive our trespassers, also ask Him to give us merciful hearts; lead us not into temptation, direct our feet in time of trial; but deliver us from evil, that is, from the devil and the anti-Christ. Amen."

This prayer will lead us to know and love Our Father Founder. It will help us to live with him through each day, and in each missionary labor. We can use it to remain in his presence, and thus reap the assistance which he knows so well we need. What greater joy for a father than to be fatherly.

Then we have Our Blessed Mother; certainly the source of heavenly aid and practical help. Is she hidden at Holguin? Was she prepared to use this incident to help us? Indeed she was. To prove it she even left her image visible in the scar tissue of St. Claret's wound. We can count on Our Mother being our life all the time. From her heart as from a womb the Congregation sprang. She gave her heart to be the soul which vivifies it. It's vigor is but the love of her heart creating, expanding, nourishing, perfecting.

To Mary may be applied the simile of the vine and the branches. For us, she is the vine and we are the branches.

The sap which enlivens this vital being, the Congregation, is the spirit flowing from the heart of Our Mother, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit.

And so we know that Mary was at Holguin. She was in St. Claret; and in him with great fulness, for the Congregation was yet young, and there were but few branches to absorb all the sap. First Mary gave St. Claret life in order that he might live through the experience we are commemorating. Secondly she gave him Claretian life, both for himself and for us. Why? What lesson did she wish to teach. What advantage did she foresee to be of benefit to us? The answer is summarized in what we can call her "role" at Holguin.

This role was the same which was hers on Mt. Calvary. From our vantage point in the twentieth century we can look back through the ages of theologians, mystics, and spiritual writers and describe that role quite well. We know that at Calvary Mary was principally a Co-Redemptrix. Analogously speaking, she was, with Christ, both a priest and a victim. Being interiorly united to Christ in a high degree, she shared his torments and suffered as if she herself were a victim on the cross. Being exteriorly separated from Christ, she was called upon to ratify or reject this sacrifice God had requested. Being Christ's mother intensified both of these pressures bearing on her sensitized, motherly soul. But being the Virgo fidelis, the Ancilla Domini, she was

faithful to the end, to her God and to her Son.

In the Sacred Heart of Jesus during the crucifixion, Mary was both contained and containing. As regards mankind, her heart was ever the chief object of sweet complacency to the infinitely, loving heart of Jesus. But her Immaculate Heart was also a refuge for His Heart, since there were but few hearts that understood His. On Calvary her heart was the only one to fathom the depths of His sorrow and of His love. Christians conjecture that Mary was a support to Jesus on the cross. That her soul clung to His, and burst itself in efforts to uphold His, we cannot doubt. In what way, and to what degree is still a matter for the contemplation of scholars and mystics.

Our Blessed Mother at Holguin reenacted her role. In this little bit of Calvary she was again a priest-victim, united both to the Congregation and to St. Clare. She was interiorly united to this son who loved her so constantly. She was exteriorly offering his oblation to the Father, accepting it from his hands ^(Claret) no doubt, and purifying it in her heart, that heart ever immersed in the Heart of her Son. In her motherly heart she praised God for this trial vouchsafed to her Congregation; she offered her assistance to St. Clare in order that he might be sustained and offer his oblation with right intention, generosity, and abandonment. The dirty deed of Holguin was in reality a radiant

gift, a shining diamond, the first in a series which will one day form a heavy-laden crown for Christ the King.

For the Congregation Holguin was an invitation to participate in a little bit of Calvary also. This baptism of blood was a preview and augur of that blessed suffering which is to be our lot along with all that goes to make up our role in the Mystical Body. It previewed all the little sufferings and sacrifices as well as a big one, the struggle against the anti-Christ. It was a goad to stimulate us to imitate the virtues of Our Father Founder, and a pledge of our final victory.

For St. Claret Holguin was a privilege. It was also a part of his due, namely to be the model and to set the example for apostolic men, to be all things to all of his men. It was an opportunity to play the leader which he was.

Through the virtue which she sustained in St. Claret, Our Blessed Mother has given us a pledge of her aid, her love, and final success in all our endeavors. She has placed these at our disposal in order that we might use them to our merit. They are ours at a price, the price of habitual recollection and prayer. For these two requisites pave the way to union with her motherly heart. She is always present to us. It is our job but to place ourselves in her presence.

The practical ways are many. But for us above all should be the remembrance that she is our mother. She will help us as a mother. And thus we will have the joy to act as, and in reality be, her sons.

On Mt. Calvary Our Blessed Lord purchased for us a rebirth as sons of God. He did this with the help of His mother, whom He made our mother also. She who had conceived us at the Annunciation in the conception of the whole Christ, brought us forth on Calvary from her sorrowful and Immaculate Heart. She who was made the mother of all men was made our mother in particular.

At Holguin she reminded our Holy Founder of the price of his and our sonship. She granted him to recognize this by experience itself that we are bought at a great cost. She reminded him that our sonship came by bloody sacrifice; that our victory over satan will come to us also at the cost of sacrifice; that the souls which we will win to Christ will come by blood. We sons share in the inheritance which she and Christ have won. This inheritance is the wealth of salvation. Indeed we have this wealth at our disposal; but yet we must enter into the act of sacrifice to apply it to souls. Yet our share is small for the price has already been paid.

During our career we shall meet a Holguin in one form or another. Let us be prepared as was Our Holy

Father Founder, by having a constant bond of union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Through her heart we also shall have the virtue of St. Clare to spontaneously, sincerely, and completely love and serve God in each and every act of our lives.

"sub Spiritu Sancto"
Feast of the Divine Maternity, 1955.